

MJ & AB WAUGH
VIGNERONS

Greenock Creek WINES

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Hello Friends,

Yes, it's that time of the year again – time to let you know what we've been up to over the past 12 months, and to provide you with the details of our new releases for this year.

Probably the most exciting news from last year is that we are grandparents again – twice – two new grandsons! Adam David was born last August on our retailers' tasting day (very good planning on Alicia's part!), and Oliver Jarrod was born in September (12 days later), just before we opened cellar door. We think both sets of parents were trying to avoid any cellar door work last year! Both boys are now almost a year old and are absolutely adorable – just like their respective brother and sister!



Annabelle, Michael and Grandchildren on
Glenelg Carousel, August 2010

The other bit of major news is about our neighbour's property, which we purchased three years ago. The land is adjacent to our Alices Block Shiraz and adjoins our home block along the Greenock Creek. The property was operated for many years as a poultry farm, so consequently Peter, Henry and Joe have had a lot of extra work removing the large sheds and associated infrastructure before the land could be prepared for vines. We have taken cuttings from the Roennfeldt Road and Seven Acre vineyards, and planting will commence in October.

We didn't think a few years ago that another project would be on the cards at this time in our lives, but the property adjoins ours, so it seemed a logical decision - and it's only a small vineyard of 7 or 8 acres. Of course the other reason is that Mother Nature doesn't always provide us with regular harvests, and as you will know in some years our production is very low. We only use grapes from our own estate and this means that there can be significant variations in tonnages from one vintage to the next. Hopefully when this little vineyard comes into bearing it will provide an alternative wine when we need to place restrictions on our existing wines in years of low yield.

Our vintage this year was quite "normal" – which made a wonderful change from the drought, heatwaves and stresses of the past few years! The ripening period was fairly cool with consistent temperatures and just enough hot days and lovely cool nights to produce wonderful flavours and bouquets. Of course the wines are all still in wood and it will be some time yet before we can truly evaluate them, but so far they are looking very good. It might just be another one of those wonderful "even year" vintages that produce truly excellent wines.

For all those people who have been patiently waiting (and some that are getting a little anxious) **Cellar Door** will open this year on **11 September**. Once again we look forward to catching up with those who can make it for a visit, and of course spring is always a nice time to be in the Barossa.

Over the years we have resisted moving to screw caps for our wines, and there still seems to be considerable debate on how consumers feel about these closures. Therefore before we do anything "radical", we thought we would conduct a quick survey of our loyal customers to gauge your views on

this issue. Therefore we have included an extra line on the order form and would really appreciate your thoughts on this matter.

Once again we have been delighted by the number of our wine customers who have used **Miriam's Cottage** when visiting the Barossa. So a special "thank you" to these lovely people, and we trust they all had a wonderful time during their stay! If you are coming to the area and are looking for centrally located accommodation in Tanunda do give us a ring (the number is the same as for the winery) and hopefully we may be able to assist.

Again we thank Philip White for reviewing our new wines and providing his colourful and descriptive notes, something that we really appreciate him doing for us each year. Included in Philip's notes this year is an updated evaluation of the 2008 Cornerstone Grenache released last year, just as a comparison with the current release. While we have only a small amount of this wine available, we have decided to include it on the order form in case people want to do their own comparisons.

Finally, a big "thank you" to our wonderful customers for the continued support! We look forward to catching up with many of you again this year in person, by telephone, fax or email.

Kindest regards and best wishes,
Michael & Annabelle

The 2010 Releases

Tasting notes and comments by Philip White

As the world's wine scribes are suddenly showing particular interest in the Australian wine industry's lack of the French concept they call *terroir*, it amuses me that the Greenock Creek wines of Michael and Annabelle Waugh have been quietly sitting here, displaying their specific, highly individualistic *terroirs* with disarming honesty, year in, year out, enjoyed mainly by those lucky enough to be on this mailing list.

2008 was the second in the string of savage drought vintages, and the first with an extremely destructive heatwave. In the face of this climatic violence, the wines in this release are particularly fascinating reflections of their various *terroirs*, and give rise to ruminations about the dangerous preoccupations with "low yields" and "dry grown" at the expense of all other aspects of viticulture. As the subsequent drought years unfold, we shall see the importance of whole vineyard management become increasingly manifest in the wines: a healthy, balanced, modest vine is invariably a better reflection of its *terroir* than anything starved of water in pursuit of low yields.

Even in the very old days of horse-farmed vineyards without irrigation pipes, vine gardeners knew the importance of a bucket of water now and then in drought years! A live vineyard beats a dead one, hands down.

So with this second consecutive set of drought-affected wines, we should be seriously admiring of Michael's precise but sensitive vineyard management: the wines are delightful testament to the understanding of modest expectations, and the philosophy of healthy vine balance and managed plant stress that marks Greenock Creek.

I tasted these wines on two extended occasions, a month apart. Each time I examined them over several days, and, just for mischief, looked at the first lot of bottles a month after they were first opened. I have skun them and scoured them and exposed them from their bare bones to their surly exhalations, and report that they are the strongest, most consistent set of Greenock Creeks offered, well, perhaps ever.

Of course such a test is not in the least bit scientific, and you'd be silly and wasteful to emulate me, but I should comment that the Cornerstone Grenache 2008 was in incredible condition after a whole month's air.

Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache 2008 (16% alcohol)

An extra year of cellaring has unlocked just enough of this wine's mystery to earn it another point. The biggest change is in its whole form, not its myriad aromatic components. It is letting us have just a slightly deeper glimpse into its brooding soul. It's ever-so-slightly softer. The nougat and maraschino

cherries are fresher and brighter in their silky smooth way, with that decorative ooze of raspberry offering plush counterpoint to neatly, precisely spicy oak. That spice intermingles perfectly with the smell of the rocks and the sparse dirt of that hard old hill. Its flavours are tight and feminine in a fit, willowy way, but it's intense and surly and its velvety tannins draw it out across your palate in such a languid but authoritative manner ... the fact that this vineyard is actually on Roennfeldt's is often overlooked: if Michael held the wine for release as a five-year-old, with the Roennfeldt's Cabernet Sauvignon and the Shiraz, I'm sure we would all hold it in much deeper awe. In other words, this is the bargain of the bunch. Unbelievable. It holds its head very high amongst the swelling mob of top-quality Grenache wines from the Barossa and McLaren Vale, and with structure like this, and the mighty force we can expect from this vineyard, it will probably outlive them. **95+++ points**

Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache 2009 (14% alcohol)

While it is a different - dare I say more *elegant?* - style than the blockbuster 08, this could be the best Grenache Michael has made from the Roennfeldt vineyard. We need five years to know. In spite of the drought, his painstaking restoration of these tough old vines is now beginning to show with authority. In such difficult conditions, this fruit suggests vines so happily fit and balanced they're almost smug. They provide a Doctorate-level lesson in what a sublime, grand delight great Grenache can be. The classic fresh panforte aromas are here in abundance: minced fruits and nuts and dark spices glower and simmer like the ghost train in slo-mo. The primary fruits have not yet awoken. This is a more lissome, finer wine than many of its predecessors, but it is no less intense. It's like a black steel rapier, dripping with the blood red juices of the trifle it's just pierced. Its tannins are classic 2008: drawing and gravelly; black as carbon and old Bibles. Where the mighty 08 was feminine, this is more of a Zorro, slinking through a window. It is dumbfounding when it hits. Whips and cloaks and everything. Black horses. Supple leather topboots. Mmmm. I'm waiting to see the lass he's gonna save. **95++ points**

Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 (16% alcohol)

Many deep red thinkers suggest the Barossa sometimes makes Cabernet that beats its Shiraz. Here's a wine that many will offer as proof. All the impossible florals are here, with the confectioner's window wide open next door. Typical Greenock Creek Cabernet, in other words. But this wine also makes people smile. It is brazenly open and expressive. It is unbuttoning its blouse. Musk and lavender and blueberries and violets. And then the more sinister darknesses. Deadly nightshade and juniper. Dry black dirt and the old black pepper tin. And simmering in the middle, barely evident in this its infancy, an artery of juicy sweet fruits. Its flavours are a seamless extension of this bouquet, sinuous and strapping, but with very frank gravelly tannins. In other words, a great Cabernet, unblemished by sophistry or polish. It doesn't need any. And it doesn't begin to look like 16% alcohol. The damn thing looks stropy, but not gargantuan. **94+++**

Greenock Creek Seven Acre Block Shiraz 2008 (15.5% alcohol)

It's alarming to think of how just fifteen years back we were smelling the first Seven Acre, in all its bouncy brash youth. It was floral, and bright. Effusive. Now we see an infinitely more complex, surly, adult wine that seems to want to weather the hot years without anybody looking. This wine has gnarly grumpiness. It is obviously a wine from vines which have their feet deep in tough ground, which is exactly what those ancient quartzites and dolomitic siltstones are. Tough. But they must retain smidgeons of moisture, because when you contemplate this wine you can almost feel those roots hanging onto their mean old rocks like there was no tomorrow. They're the only ones they've got. So they squeeze out what they can. Beautiful sweet sweaty syrups are the heart of this evaporated wonder. There are no pretty bits; just the slinky syrup. The essence. Briar and leather and fig are all squeezed in, prune, juniper, ripe blueberries and beets. The palate is strapping, lithe and sluggish: it settles into the mouth with sublime arrogance, like a shiny black panther, licking its shoulder in magnificent recline. Its tannins are finer than usual: not as confronting as in the 08 Cabernet or 08 Cornerstone Grenache. **93+++ points**

Greenock Creek Alices Shiraz 2008 (15.5% alcohol)

Alices typical white bread and cream are becoming as regular as clockwork, drought or not. This vineyard produces incredibly plush, fleshy flavour which this year has been neatly offset with some edgy, spicy oak and the acrid prickle of the dust and stone and pronounced aniseed and licorice tints. The 08 fig and prune duo are obvious, but they're mere filling in all that spongy white Vienna flesh: there's not

much amalgamation happening yet in this dazzling, tantalizing spectrum of aromas. So the wine's a bit scatty and juvenile and hasn't yet learned some simple grooming. After all that sniffing, the palate's slinky, and seems to be wrapped like sinew, muscle and chubby fat around a whiprod acid spine. Like the Seven Acre, the tannins are finer and less obvious than usual. As far as cats go, this is a rather naughty, plump young Russian Blue. **93+++ points**

Greenock Creek Apricot Block Shiraz 2008 (16% alcohol)

Drought seems to have smitten the Apricot Block with quite a lot of Roennfeldt's character this year, which is not all that surprising, given the vineyards are adjacent, albeit with very different geological *terroir*. Maybe in the dry, the roots that reach deepest are the most dependable ones, and the Apricot Block roots may well be through to the bottom of their creekline alluvium, and now take some flavour from the same ancient basement rocks as their hillside neighbours. This is certainly a very acrid wine: it really tickles the nostrils with carbon and almost burnt coffee bean woody lignins. Some of this is probably oak-derived, but healthy grapes have more lignin in drought: they put on the toughening woodier cells as protectives. These notions are more vivid as you drink the wine: it's another lithe slinker, but it has very recently rolled in the dust. As for fruit? Well, imagine you're somewhere between August Clape's Cornas and the best dry year Vacqueyras, then add the Australian dust. Now there's some hybrid *terroir* for the English. Of the 08s, this is my equal favourite. With the Grenache, which grew just up the slope on Roennfeldt's. That's no fluke. **95+++ points**

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Shiraz 2005 (17.5% alcohol)

This reminds me of the 1995 RR Shiraz I drank with Michael, Annabelle, and Doug Govan at The Victory Hotel last winter. Why? Because it's bloody confoundingly impenetrable. This monster ain't goin' nowhere. It smells like a hardrock quarry after a blast. The miners have unwittingly intersected an ancient underground drive timbered with oily jarrah, and blown it to smithereens. Now we walk through the ruins, and smell it. Ahhhhh! Boys' stuff! I'd love to go on about fresh fruit, but the fruit in here is so concentrated and withdrawing all you really get is the oil and grease the miners have spilled and then blown up. I mean, sure, there are hints of dried figs and dates and currants like you'd get out the back of the wedding at Qana, but whoever did this miracle let off the fireworks for effect but forgot to put the water in the winejugs. Blackpowder and carbide, licorice and aniseed are here, but fruit? One currant? Two? This wine is a freak. It has great acidity in a sort of a big old oiled leather pulley belt of a palate, and really fine dusty tannins, but forget fruit. You'll have to wait twenty five years for fruit. And it never seems like anything higher than, what alcohol? Sixteen? Fifteen? It IS made from grapes, I can assure you. But what manner of grapes are these? The only ones of this sort on Earth, that's what. I've decided to recommence gymnasium training to prepare for the drought years Roennfeldts' Shiraz. Like what in Heaven or Hell will the 2008 taste like? 09? Pass me the detonators please powderman. **95+++ points**

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (13.5% alcohol)

The nightshades are profuse in this remarkable wine. This family of flowering plants – the *Solanaceae* – range from the deadly datura and belladonna through the mandrake, tobacco and petunia tribes to many essential edibles: capsicum, potato, aubergine, tomato, tamarillo, Goji berry, huckleberry and so on. While the fruits might be here aromatically – I can smell lightly roasted capsicum, for example, tamarillo, and soaking Goji - it is the leaves of these dark green plants that give this wine its glowering mood. It's uncanny. After a few days, odd pretty bits emerge. There's some frivolous, but alluring musk, some blueberry, some ground juniper berry, and some stern oak. There's a hint of soft caramel toffee, and a smell like the rough skin of the cantaloupe. But it's the stewed, reduced, compacted leaves of the nightshades that give it its dark soul. The palate has all the above. It has more evident primary fruit than the freakish 05 Roennfeldt's Shiraz, but again it seems to be pouring like some kind of black gold - whose melting point is cellar temperature - from an alchemist's concentrating furnace. A liquor. The feeling is dumbfounding. The tannins are fine and entirely supportive, the palate length and aftertaste amazing. One sip will outlast two cigarettes and a whisky. A very rare beast indeed, and one which will be remembered and revered for at least forty years. **96+++ points**